News Release
Communiqué

Ontario

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée

For Immediate Release
January 25, 2007
2007/nr-007

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVES ACCESS TO CANCER CARE

Investing $3 Million for 375 Additional Cancer Surgeries Across Ontario

HAMILTON – The McGuinty government is funding 375 additional cancer surgeries this year as it continues to improve access to cancer care for patients across the province, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Our government continues to lead an aggressive fight against cancer," said Smitherman, who made the announcement at the Juravinski Centre of Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation. "This additional investment means greater access to cancer surgeries and shorter wait times for patients."

The government is providing an additional $2.8 million to nine hospitals across Ontario to fund 375 additional cancer surgeries. This announcement builds on the $26.6-million the provincial government announced last April to add 4,741 additional cancer surgery cases in 2006/07.

Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation will receive $192,500 which will fund 30 additional cancer surgery cases. "This is great news for cancer patients in our community," said Marie Bountrogianni, MPP for Hamilton Mountain. "A diagnosis of cancer is frightening news so helping patients gain access to treatment and services and reduce their wait times will help them in their fight against this disease."

Reducing wait times for cancer surgeries is part of the government's Wait Time Strategy. For the first time, the government is collecting wait times data in order to monitor and better manage Ontario's health care services, allowing it to work with health care partners to respond quicker to areas of need.

To date, the government has invested more than $330 million this fiscal year to provide over 275,000 additional procedures for five key health care services – cancer surgeries, cardiac procedures, hip and knee joint replacement, cataract surgeries and MRI exams. As a result, people are getting the care they need more quickly in their communities.

Since the start of the wait time strategy, there has been an 11 per cent increase in the volume for cancer surgeries, and almost all cancer surgeries are now being completed within the targeted 84 days.

"Our strategy is working," Smitherman said. "We will continue to be vigilant and work with our partners like Cancer Care Ontario to provide cancer patients with the services and care they need. From research and prevention, to drugs and other treatments, Ontario has made significant progress against this disease and we will continue our fight."

"Today's announcement will give hospitals and surgeons more resources to continue to improve cancer surgery wait times for patients across the province," said Dr. Terry Sullivan, President and CEO of Cancer Care Ontario. "For the first time in Ontario we have an ability to measure cancer surgery wait times in almost real time so that we can tackle wait time challenges when and where they arise."

The government's investments in key areas have reduced wait times:

- cancer surgery down 4 per cent
- cataract surgery down 33 per cent
- hip replacements 21 per cent
- knee replacements 19 per cent,
- cardiac bypass surgery down 4 per cent
- MRI exams down 6 per cent and
- CT scans down 14 per cent.

Further information is available at www.ontariowaittimes.com

Today's announcement is just the latest example of the McGuinty government's commitment to fight cancer. Other initiatives include:

- Launching Canada's first province-wide colorectal screening program to encourage earlier detection and increase capacity to deliver more colonoscopies.
- Providing more than $356 million in base and one-time funding for cancer drug treatments covered under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's New Drug Funding Program since 2004-05
- Investing $44.5 million in new or expanded programs at six regional cancer centres (Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton, Sudbury and Thunder Bay).

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

-30-

Media Contacts:

David Spencer
Minister's Office
416-327-4320

A.G. Klei
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 1-866-532-3161

This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: http://www.health.gov.on.ca under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

Disponible en français.